

# The Status Report

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## Unsung Heroines Nomination Deadline Extended to January 28th



Due to the holiday rush and many requests for more time, we have extended the original nomination deadline of January 14th to January 28th! Don't delay, send in your form today.

**Please help us reach our goal of honoring 351 truly worthy honorees by nominating an outstanding woman from your town!**

Our Unsung Heroines are women who quietly, without fanfare or recognition, make their communities and the Commonwealth better places. *Our Unsung Heroines don't make the news, but they truly make a difference!*

**We need the public's help to identify women from every community who perform unheralded acts on a daily basis that make our neighborhoods, our cities and our towns better places to live. Our hope is to honor a diverse group of women representing all age groups, as well as all economic, political and ethnic backgrounds so please consider everyone from the young entrepreneur to the high school guidance counselor, the local parish leader to the reliable volunteer.**

Any individual may nominate one or more Massachusetts' women to be considered for selection as an Unsung Heroine. After carefully reviewing all of the nominations received, a selection committee will then choose one Unsung Heroine from each city and town. All 2008 Unsung Heroine awardees will be contacted and invited to attend a ceremony in their honor at the Massachusetts Statehouse on May 14, 2008.

Nomination forms are available for download on the MCSW website at [www.mass.gov/women](http://www.mass.gov/women). You can also contact Kim Sebastiao, Program Coordinator, at [Kimberly.Sebastiao@state.ma.us](mailto:Kimberly.Sebastiao@state.ma.us) or 617-626-6521 for more information. **Please note the deadline for nominations is January 28, 2008.**

We encourage you to download the nomination form from our website and forward it to your friends and colleagues via email to assist us in reaching out to every corner of the state and to ensure that we have representation from every community in the Commonwealth.

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## Executive Director's Corner

**Happy 2008!** As I write this on the eve of the New Hampshire primary, I am convinced that this new year is going to be truly interesting and full of groundbreaking change and possibilities. And of course all of us at the MCSW hope 2008 brings positive change for the women of Massachusetts. I was pleased to provide an article highlighting the MCSW's hopes for women in the new year to this month's *The Women's Business Journal*. For those of you who may not have access to it, I am excerpting some of it here:

We were recently asked whether Women's Commissions, which are charged with moving women to full equality, are still relevant. Judge for yourself.....

- Women continue to make an average of 77 cents for every dollar made by their male counterparts.
- Less than 25 percent of the state legislature is comprised of women.
- The glass ceiling may be cracked, but it's not broken. Women's advancement to senior-level positions has not kept pace with the opportunities.
- Men still outnumber women eight to one in the corporate boardroom.
- Seventy-two percent of families living below the federal poverty line in Massachusetts are headed by single mothers.

**Wage Equity** – Hopefully 2008 will be the year where real advances are made in closing the wage gap for the women of Massachusetts. There has been no movement in the last decade and if left as is, it is projected that women will not achieve wage parity with men until 2050. We know that women in EVERY county earn less than men – from a low of 69 cents in Plymouth County to a high of 91 cents in Suffolk County. Over the course of a lifetime this can represent between \$400,000 to \$1.2 million in lost income, based on a woman's level of educational attainment. As a first step in a series of activities to drive change, a bill has been filed in the state legislature that calls for the updating of the state's job classification system – which is over 20 years outdated. This upgrade is needed not only to ensure gender and racial wage equality for state employees, but to help the state be competitive and able to attract a quality workforce. It is hoped that movement in the public sector will provoke similar upward wage mobility in the private sector. Support is welcome on behalf of the passage of S2386 An Act to Authorize the HRD to undertake a Study of the State's Job Classification System. In addition, much more attention needs to be devoted to the private sector and making sure that businesses are dedicated to equitable financial situations for all employees. Women doctors, lawyers, educators, businesswomen and every other type of worker deserve the same opportunities for advancement AND the same salaries as their male counterparts. Tools have been developed that can be easily adopted – such as pay equity self audits. There are plenty of businesses out there leading the way – let this be the year that many more jump on the bandwagon.

The MA Coalition for Women's Wage Equality, comprised of organizations from across the state, including the MCSW, American Association of University Women, YWCAs, Business and Professional Women, NOW, The Crittenton Women's Union, Women's Commissions, continues to meet monthly to work on these issues. The Coalition's overarching goal is to close the wage gap. We welcome your participation.

**Women's Political Participation** – Women comprise 52 percent of the population of Massachusetts. Yet nowhere in government does their representation come close to this majority. Instead only 25 percent of the legislators in the State House are women, with local government figures weighing in much lower. Much is being done throughout the state to address this, yet much more integrated and focused work is needed, not only in getting women to run for office, but engaging women in working on campaigns, writing checks to support women candidates and perhaps most essentially – voting. Far too many women today are not exercising their hard won right to vote and participate in shaping their government. Single women in particular do not vote, while perhaps all do not recognize the power that their collective vote represents. Apathy or disenfranchisement must be combated with dedicated efforts to demonstrate, until women truly understand and internalize, the interrelatedness between themselves and government, as well as the importance of having women representing their interests. Women care about and intimately understand the concerns of women and bring a different style of leadership and vision to the political arena. Until women have an equal voice, and an equal number of seats at the tables of decision making and power, true change will be difficult to achieve.

*Continued on page 5...*

## **Commissioner Corner: Spotlight on Azell Murphy Cavaan**



Azell Murphy Cavaan was recently appointed to the Commission by the Caucus of Women Legislators. A resident of Springfield, Cavaan is currently the Communications Director for the City of Springfield, reporting directly to the Mayor, and often acting as a spokeswoman for the city. A former reporter for the Boston Herald and The Republican newspaper in Springfield, Cavaan is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Cavaan received her bachelor's degree in journalism from Northeastern University and went on to earn her Master's in the same field from Northwestern University where she was the founder of the Golden Key Honor Society as well as the Mary McLeod Bethune Tutoring Institute.

As a member of the MCSW, Cavaan's strengths in public relations and journalism will be an asset in publicizing such programs as the Unsung Heroines initiative as well as public hearings, the Massachusetts Women's Resource & Referral Network and more.

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## **Somerville Commission for Women Continues Fundraising**

The Somerville Commission for Women (SCW) launched its December fundraising month with a pancake breakfast hosted by the popular local restaurant, Soundbites (Ball Square, Somerville). Friends, neighbors, colleagues, and elected officials enjoyed pancakes, fruit, and a new tea recipe introduced by the Somerville Commission. State Senator Pat Jehlen, State Representative Carl Sciortino, State Representative Denise Provost, Somerville Alderman Tom Taylor, Somerville Alderman Jack Connolly, and former Somerville Mayor Eugene C. Brune all enjoyed a hearty breakfast and great conversation. Breakfasts continued throughout December on any Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday) in support of the Commission.

The SCW has begun financial literacy organizing with a city-wide program survey to identify agencies and programs with a focus on financial literacy. The project will also include reviewing successes and gaps in services, making recommendations, and issuing a report. The survey and report, created by a Tufts University Tisch Scholar working with the SCW this year, will be presented to the City and local agencies. The goal of the project is to have a macro-level focused committee of agencies focusing on financial literacy, outreaching to the public to educate on the importance of participating in money-related workshops, and supporting agencies to run financial literacy activities and programs. Additionally, the City of Somerville's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development and the SCW are working together on a proposal submitted by the SCW for a new children's financial literacy education program, that will include a savings program and working with banks to create new savings accounts for kids up to 9th grade/16 years old.

In September the SCW publicly launched the Somerville Anti-Violence Taskforce and released the first Somerville Anti-Violence Programs Directory. Recent accomplishments for the Taskforce include the new directory, establishing monthly meetings with the Chief of Police, creating new palm cards with emergency DV/ Sexual Assault resources, and Taskforce members gathering in main meetings and subcommittees to continue working on its action agenda.

Along with convening the Anti-Violence Taskforce, the Executive Director for the SCW participates in many collaborative networks including the state-wide Multicultural Immigrant Coalition Against Violence (MICA), MA Coalition for Women's Wage Equality, Somerville Police Chief Anti-Violence Group, Somerville Executive Directors Network, and Cambridge Birth Center Advisory Board. The SCW continues to run and facilitate the Teens Against Dating Abuse (TADA) after school group at Somerville High School.

The Commission is tracking different legislation and line items that support its mission and goals including a victims' rights bill, the RISE line item to support immigrant service agencies' domestic violence programming, pay equity, paid leave, and comprehensive health education.

In 2008, the Somerville Commission for Women will celebrate its 20th anniversary. The Commission is planning activities to commemorate this historic accomplishment and step up recruiting to increase participation on the Commission.

## Advocacy Day for Victims Rights Set for January 28th at State House

### MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE FOR VICTIM ASSISTANCE



### VICTIM & WITNESS ASSISTANCE BOARD

On January 28th from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) will be hosting an Advocacy Day for Victim Rights at the Massachusetts State House. This event is an opportunity to demonstrate widespread support for the swift passage and enactment of Senate Bill 802, MOVA's legislation to amend and strengthen the Victim Bill of Rights.

This long overdue legislation, informed by a large and diverse number of victims/survivors, victim service providers, criminal justice personnel, and others from across the state, amends and strengthens the existing Victim Bill of Rights (MGL Ch. 258B). It will, when passed, reinstate Massachusetts as a leader in affording rights to victims and witnesses of crime.

#### **Important highlights of the provisions of this legislation include:**

- Broader notification of victim rights, including making notice available and accessible to non-English speaking victims and witnesses, and to families of victims in unsolved homicides, among others.
- A fundamental provision for security in the Commonwealth's courthouses for victims and witnesses – specifically, with a separate and secure waiting area in all courthouses, as promised by this very victim rights law over 20 years ago. This will significantly help protect against all too common threats and intimidation of witnesses when they come to court.
- Specific rights for victims and witnesses who are children, elders, or victims with disabilities, including having a support person in the courtroom during their testimony, providing a general orientation to the courtroom and court procedures, and allowing for Victim Impact Statements to be provided via audio or video as necessary.

Attending organizations may reserve a resource table for the morning by contacting Rebecca O'Connor at 617.727.7885 or Rebecca.O'Connor@state.ma.us. Also, if you have not already done so, please send your written statement or letter of support for Senate Bill 802 to MOVA. Exhibiting at Advocacy Day will signify your support of S. 802. Samples can be found on the MOVA website ([www.mass.gov/mova](http://www.mass.gov/mova)). Upon receipt of a letter from your agency head or Executive Director, a table will be held for you.

## Wage Project Releases Unsettling Survey Results

The WAGE Project, Inc. recently released the results of a national survey of working women. The survey asked questions regarding women's recent experiences with unfair or unequal treatment at work and the responses received were from women of all earning levels and fields. The major findings were as follows:

1. 70% of respondents reported inequitable treatment at work; two out of three of whom attributed this treatment to gender bias and discrimination;
2. More than half who reported inequitable treatment and pay took no action for fear of retaliation or because they were convinced their chance to improve their situation was hopeless;
3. Less than 5% of the women who tried to get paid and treated fairly, even with solid data to make their cases, achieved the equity they sought.
4. One in five (20%) women reported leaving or planning to leave her job because of this treatment.

While this survey was not a random sample of all working women, the WAGE survey points out that gender discrimination is taking a serious toll on the nation's economic performance. As a result of the survey, WAGE President Evelyn Murphy testified in support of the Paycheck Fairness Act in both houses of Congress, the first hearings on such legislation in 14 years. For more on the work of the WAGE Project please visit [www.wageproject.org](http://www.wageproject.org).



**Take Action. Get Educated. Get Involved.**

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the movement to advance women in the Commonwealth you can start by attending any one of the number of events and meetings taking place across the state in the coming weeks.

**Tuesday, January 22 (3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.): Massachusetts Coalition for Women's Wage Equality Meeting**

**Location:** Charles F. Hurley Building, Directors Conference Room 3rd Floor (19 Staniford Street, Boston)

**Details:** Members of the MA Coalition for Women's Wage Equality will meet to discuss next steps in passing wage equity-related legislation and hosting pay equity events. Anyone interested in joining this growing Coalition should contact MCSW Outreach Coordinator Jill Ashton at 617-626-6525 or [jill.ashton@state.ma.us](mailto:jill.ashton@state.ma.us).

**Thursday, January 24 (11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.): Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Pinnacle Awards**

**Location:** The Westin Boston Waterfront (425 Summer Street, Boston)

**Details:** A highlight on the Chamber's annual calendar, more than 1,000 business men and women will gather to recognize the accomplishments of eight women in Greater Boston who have achieved excellence in business and management. Individual tickets are \$100. RSVP date is January 18th. For more information please contact Seanna Sullivan at [ssullivan@bostonchamber.com](mailto:ssullivan@bostonchamber.com).

**Monday, January 28 (9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.): MOVA Advocacy Day for Victim Rights**

**Location:** Massachusetts State House (Corner of Beacon & Park Streets, Boston)

**Details:** This event is an opportunity to demonstrate widespread support for the swift passage and enactment of Senate Bill 802, MOVA's legislation to amend and strengthen the Victim Bill of Rights. See article on Page 4 for more details.

**Thursday, February 7 (8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.): Boston Go Red For Women Luncheon and Educational Forum**

**Location:** The Westin Boston Waterfront (425 Summer Street, Boston)

**Details:** The Go Red for Women Luncheon and Educational Forum takes a critical step toward raising women's awareness that heart disease is their number-one cause of death. Women who understand their risks of heart disease, and know the steps to prevent it, are better equipped to avert this serious – and mostly preventable – health threat. The Luncheon mixes education, passion for the cause and a fun and entertaining fashion show. For more details please contact Michelle Carvalho at (508) 656-2011 or [michelle.carvalho@heart.org](mailto:michelle.carvalho@heart.org).

**Friday, March 14 (8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.): Feel Safe Again, Inc. & MA State Police 1st Annual Stalking Conference and 4th Annual Benefit Dinner**

**Location:** Devens Common Center (31 Andrews Parkway, Devens)

**Details:** This training event is recommended for victim service providers, law enforcement professionals, fire and rescue professionals, emergency medical technicians, attorneys, judges, legislators, mental health professionals, youth counselors, and others involved in supporting victims of crime, as well as victims and survivors of stalking. For more information please visit [www.feelsafeagain.org/conference.html](http://www.feelsafeagain.org/conference.html).

*Do you have an event you would like to see on this list in an upcoming issue of The Status Report? E-mail the details to Program Coordinator Kim Sebastiao at [Kimberly.sebastiao@state.ma.us](mailto:Kimberly.sebastiao@state.ma.us) and we will do our best to include your event in our next issue.*

*... ED Corner continued from page 2*

**Work/Family Balance** - Author Anna Quindlen, speaking to an audience of 5,200 women at the third annual Massachusetts Conference for Women last month, addressed the state of women today, noting that the price of progress has resulted in a diminished message. She said "now that the novelty of women's advancement has worn off, we have to goad harder to make sure that the "right thing" happens. We are rising on the shoulders of those who came before us. We need to rise up.....AND, reach down." She suggests that the home is the new frontier in women's rights, citing that the battle for the "fairness factor" in the fabric of family life has not been won. She says women have hit the glass ceiling at home, working two full time jobs – their profession and their homemaking – while their husband still mostly does one. "Women need to provide leadership in redefining women's roles in the household. They need to challenge the male status quo, raise feminist sons, and change the hearts and minds of their husbands."

**NOTE:** We would love to hear from you what your hopes and dreams are for the women of Massachusetts in 2008. Please feel free to forward them for us at [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us). We will print an overview of what we hear in the February edition of this newsletter.



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